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Making the Grade #43: The Great Grade-Off; A Groundbreaking New Coin Book; Plus New Purchases

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It's been a minute since my last e-newsletter. So much so that I've angered 3 of my 9 subscribers. And for that - I apologize.

So, to compensate y'all for this grievous injustice, you can either be dazzled by my pithy but insightful mini-articles below, or do what most folks do and scroll past them down to the new purchases.

The Great Florida Grade-Off

My wife is now really into those cooking challenge shows, with names like Meatball Brawl, or Cupcake Explosion, or the Great Cookie Cook Off. Er, - I think, anyway; I usually leave the room when she turns those shows on so I'm not sure of their exact titles.

So I had the idea for the title of this article to make the recent grading contest at the FUN show sound like one of those super-awesome shows. Sponsored by NGC, this contest seemed to have more contestants than ever.

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There are separate groups for younger numismatists as well as more experienced folks. I came in 4th out of 103 graders this time around. Not bad, but I'm still gunning for that #1 spot. Maybe next time. Congrats to the winners.

I strongly encourage all to participate the next grading contest when they offer it. NGC did a brilliant job this time around – mixing in wildly toned coins (toned by mother nature, of course), world coins, altered coins, fakes, and exnumia. There was even a genuine coin worth tens of thousands of dollars in the group (I guess so contestants would think – *that coin is so nice it MUST be fake!*). Anyway, here is a link to NGC describing it:

<https://www.ngccoin.com/news/article/8055/NGC-grading-contest/>

The Book Plug: Bad Metal

Perhaps the toughest type of coin book to write is one where there is no precedence, no defined "edges" to the subject, and one in which there are innumerable "mints" – all of whom wish to remain secret. So it is with great admiration I announce that Winston Zack has written such a book.

The Full title of the book is: "Bad Metal, Copper & Nickel: Circulating Contemporary Counterfeit United States Coins."

This 320 page book is the first of three planned volumes. This one covers all of the denominations from half cents through 5 cent nickels. It profiles both the counterfeiters themselves as well as the coins they secretly made. There are almost 200 full color photos illustrating nearly every known variety of handmade, die struck counterfeit made to circulate as money. Ironically, these counterfeits are much rarer than the genuine coins they were imitating, and often sell for quite a bit more.

Here is a link to learn more:

<https://www.badmetalcoin.com/product-page/bad-metal-copper-and-nickel>

Sing Along With The Sex Pistols

There is now a law that says every email you receive these days must mention Covid-19, so here's mine. You have probably heard the recommendation to sing "*Happy Birthday*" twice for the duration of washing of your hands, which is 20 seconds long.

I recently read that the first verse of the Sex Pistols' *God save the Queen* is also 20 seconds long. So that's what I started singing. Or I did until my wife said that I sounded absolutely terrible and that I should immediately stop.

Being unfavorably compared to the musical stylings of Mr. Johnny Rotten... I feel low.

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1793 Chain Cent. AMERI Type. PCGS graded VF20.

Sheldon-1, rarity-4. Considered by most to be the very first regular issue one cent coin. Note that Doug Bird's PCGS AU50 specimen sold 2 months ago for \$276,000 in PCGS AU50; that makes this VF-20 seem like a bargain, at least in my eyes. Nice color, hard surfaces and accompanied by a PCGS TrueView image. \$49,500.

US Coins

1787 New Jersey Copper, with Undertype of an Extremely Rare CT Copper. PCGS graded Very Fine-25.

This New Jersey copper is the Maris 56-n variety – the popular (but not rare) Camel Head variety. However, the undertype is of an extremely rare Connecticut copper – the Miller 33.28-Z.20, solidly in the Rarity-7 category. This is the rarest Connecticut undertype variety that I am aware of on a Camel Head New Jersey copper. To borrow from an old Certs Breath Mints commercial – “Its. two... two ... two coins in one!”. The undertype attribution is guaranteed of course, and the coin comes with PCGS TrueView image so you can blow up the image to the size of New Jersey if you wish. \$1950.

1795 Draped Bust \$1 PCGS graded AU53.

B-15. Just a gorgeous example of this important type coin. Significant cartwheel luster under a ring of green-blue-gold peripheral toning. \$19,750.

1840 No Drapery Seated Dime. PCGS graded AU58.

A lovely example of a 3 year type coin. I sent this coin in myself and was honestly surprised when it did not grade mint state. Judge for yourself. \$595.

1863 Indian Cent. PCGS graded MS63 CAC.

A nice original coin, but what I love about this coin is the big ol' cud on the reverse at 9 o'clock. \$495.

1879 Indian Cent. PCGS graded Proof-65 Red & Brown.

A stunning example of what specialists call a "greenie". A proof Indian cent that has toned a vibrant green is a rare find, and avidly collected. \$1250.

1883 Indian Cent. PCGS graded Proof-65 Brown CAC.

This Indian cent proof also shows that magic green color, albeit to a lesser extent. \$895.

1890-CC \$20 Gold. PCGS AU58.

Pleasing appearance and close to full mint state. \$4975.

1900 Barber Half Dollar. PCGS graded MS64.

Pure white save for a ring of peripheral toning on both sides. You will love this coin. \$1050.

1923-S Monroe Commemorative. PCGS graded MS60, Gold CAC.

2 Piece PCGS holder. Pretty Coin. \$195.

1940 Walking Liberty Half Dollar. PCGS graded MS64 CAC.

Gorgeously toned. \$295.

1941 to 1947-D Walking Liberty Half Dollar Short Set. All graded PCGS MS64.

A neat 20 coin set, some on old holders as you can see. All are white or very lightly toned. A good value in today's market. \$1595.

World Coins, Exonumia, Flotsam & Jetsam

1547 Polish/Lithuanian ½ Grosz. NGC Graded MS65.

A blazing white, 100% full gem. Gem uncirculated coins in the 1500's nearly do not exist. \$975.

1549 Polish/Lithuanian ½ Grosz. PCGS Graded MS65.

A blazing white, 100% full gem. Comes with PCGS TrueView Images. \$1475.

1704 Louis d'or Contemporary counterfeit Gold Coin. Louis the 14th. Uncirculated [uncertified].

Struck on a cut down genuine Louis d'Or cold coin, and still retaining its mint flash. Considerable undertype is visible. Coins like this undoubtedly circulated in the Americas in colonial times. \$675.

1714-Mo J Philip V gold Cob 8 Escudos Gold Coin. NGC graded XF45.

From the famed 1715 Plate Fleet shipwreck. Mexico City mint. An outstanding, centrally-struck Mint State cob with impressive legends and central designs. Bright yellow-gold and almost never encountered at such a reasonable price. \$8750.

(1774) Skull & Butterfly Medal. Silver. Almost Uncirculated Details [uncertified].

40mm diameter. The obverse of this large and impressive medal has a portrait of Moses Mendelssohn. The reverse sports a really cool skull with a butterfly fluttering its wings and the writing: "Phaedon" and "Natus MDCCXXIX" [born, 1729]. Mendelssohn was considered a founder of the Jewish Enlightenment movement and is an ancestor of the composer Felix Mendelssohn. Quite rare, with only a very few specimens traced. This one has AU details with some subtle smoothing in the field. \$1150.

Undated Bar Copper. Unlisted Struck Copy. Copper. Extremely Fine [uncertified].

114.8 grains. Approximately 25.5 mm x 27 mm. Struck on a slightly ovoid planchet, both sides are sharply defined overall, with a touch of softness at the left reverse border. Ex. Eric Newman estate (privately); Baldwin, August 1958. Envelope included. \$975.

1857 Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome. Silver Plated Bronze. Uncirculated [uncertified].

This medal was engraved by Jacques Wiener. It was silver plated at the time of striking. I have also

seen this medal in solid silver. Construction started in 1506 and was completed 109 short years later; I believe they used the same crew that has been working on a stretch of I-95 in Connecticut since I was a child. . Interestingly, it is the largest house of worship in Christendom. \$995.

(1860-7) Japan Gold Koban. PCGS graded AU55.

JNDA 09-23 Man'en 万延 variety. 3.30 grams. Gorgeous green-copper-gold in color. Most of these are found damaged or repaired, most likely due to their somewhat delicate nature. I'd be willing to bet most serious coin collectors do not have even one Koban in their collection. Here is your chance – and it is a real looker too. This is the second time I've offered this very specimen over the years. PCGS #392755. \$1250.

1924-S over S over S Standing Liberty Quarter Contemporary Counterfeit. Very Fine [uncertified].

This was actually described as a genuine variety in the first edition of J.H. Cline's book on Standing Liberty Quarters, though it was removed without explanation from later editions. It is a well made coin for the period, though with crude details under close examination. I am told that Dr. Michael Fey wrote an article on this counterfeit in 2008, but I was unable to locate it. \$495.

1776-1976 Libertas Americana Silver Medal. PCGS graded MS64.

1976 Libertas Americana Medal. Modern Paris Mint Dies. Silver. 78 mm. Both sides exhibit matte-like pearl gray surfaces and a bold strike throughout. This is a modern striking that uses the design of the classic Libertas Americana medal (the original medal was ranked #1 in the 2007 reference "100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens" by Katherine Jaeger and Q. David Bowers). \$1250.

"1781" (2014) Libertas Americana Medal, Paris Mint Restrike. Silver, 5 oz. NGC graded Proof-69 Ultra Cameo.

A large, impressive, heavy silver medal made in the same mint that made them back in 1783. Dealers usually want a lot of money for these popular medals, but every once in a while I am able to buy one at a reasonable price, and when I do I pass it along to you. The last one I offered garnered several orders. \$595.

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